



Universal credit managing migration pilot

Final results: how the Citizens Advice service can support universal credit claimants to successfully manage under the new system

Universal credit

Universal credit is the single welfare payment that has started to replace six existing benefits, including those paid to people in employment on low incomes: working tax credit, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment support allowance, income support, child tax credit and housing benefit.

Citizens Advice welcomes the aims of universal credit to simplify the benefits system and make work pay. This principle has value for both society and claimants alike, and chimes with our ideals of enabling and empowering people, making them more independent and able to manage their money. But, universal credit needs to be implemented correctly in order to realise its potential. We recognise that claimants may need support to successfully migrate to the new system, and to therefore realise the advantages this change could bring.

The Government's proposals for universal credit could have the following key advantages:

- The claims process will be simpler requiring claimants to deal with only one Government department, reducing risks of delays in benefits being paid or over payment.
- The system will be more responsive and efficient at adapting to changes in individuals circumstances and earnings.
- It will be easier for people to calculate whether or not they would be better off by working more hours.

Universal credit must be implemented correctly to realise these advantages. To empower and enable claimants it is vital that the right support is in place to help people migrate successfully to the new system. It is essential that the Government provides additional funding to support those transferring to universal credit to prepare and improve their capacity to manage under the new system.

Managing migration pilot

The Managing migration pilot was designed to understand how many of our current clients would be affected by universal credit, and understand their demographic and capability profile. From this, we wanted to identify which services were needed to provide them with necessary support, and how effective these were at equipping clients to successfully manage the migration to universal credit.

Major findings

9 out of 10 clients will need support to manage the transition, in one or more of the following capability areas: monthly payments, budgeting, banking, staying informed and getting online.

After receiving advice and support from the CAB service **over half of clients have improved skills** in all five key areas.

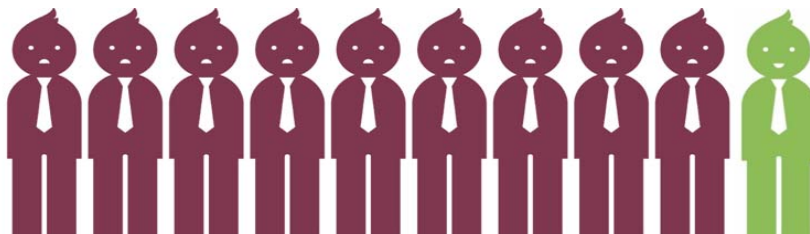
It is not just those that are vulnerable that will need support. Our pilot identified initial support needs across all capability areas were the same for all profile characteristics, with 38 per cent of clients needing support across all five capability areas.

50 per cent of everyday CAB clients are currently affected by the change, and already see our bureaux as a place for advice and support. This is equivalent to one million people across our service. We anticipate that we will be a first port of call for many of the 10 million peopleⁱ who are expected to deal with universal credit. This demand will have significant implications for our service.

Our pilot shows that our advice and support, combined with new tailored services, can help empower the majority of people who need support to become more independent by improving their skills and abilities to manage the change.

With additional funding for the right support services to meet people's needs, we can move over half of those clients who lacked the appropriate capabilities for universal credit, to improve their skills and abilities, and be more likely able to manage a claim.

Before: 92% do not have the necessary capacity to manage transition



After: CAB support improved capacity and skills for over half of clients; 23% disengaged; 20% have not progressed.



We can diagnose clients' needs - and improve their capacity



73% needed help with monthly payments



77% needed help with budgeting



52% needed help with banking



81% needed help staying informed



66% needed help getting online

The need for support

We have identified the barriers that exist around successful transition to universal credit.

These barriers are a combination of external factors (e.g. internet access), client capacity (e.g. literacy), client knowledge (e.g. financial capability), and client behaviour (e.g. knowing about, and responding to the changes).

Key findings on the barriers around the transition to universal credit include:

95 per cent agree they would benefit from having a choice to be paid fortnightly.

80 per cent agree they would benefit from having rent paid directly to their landlord.

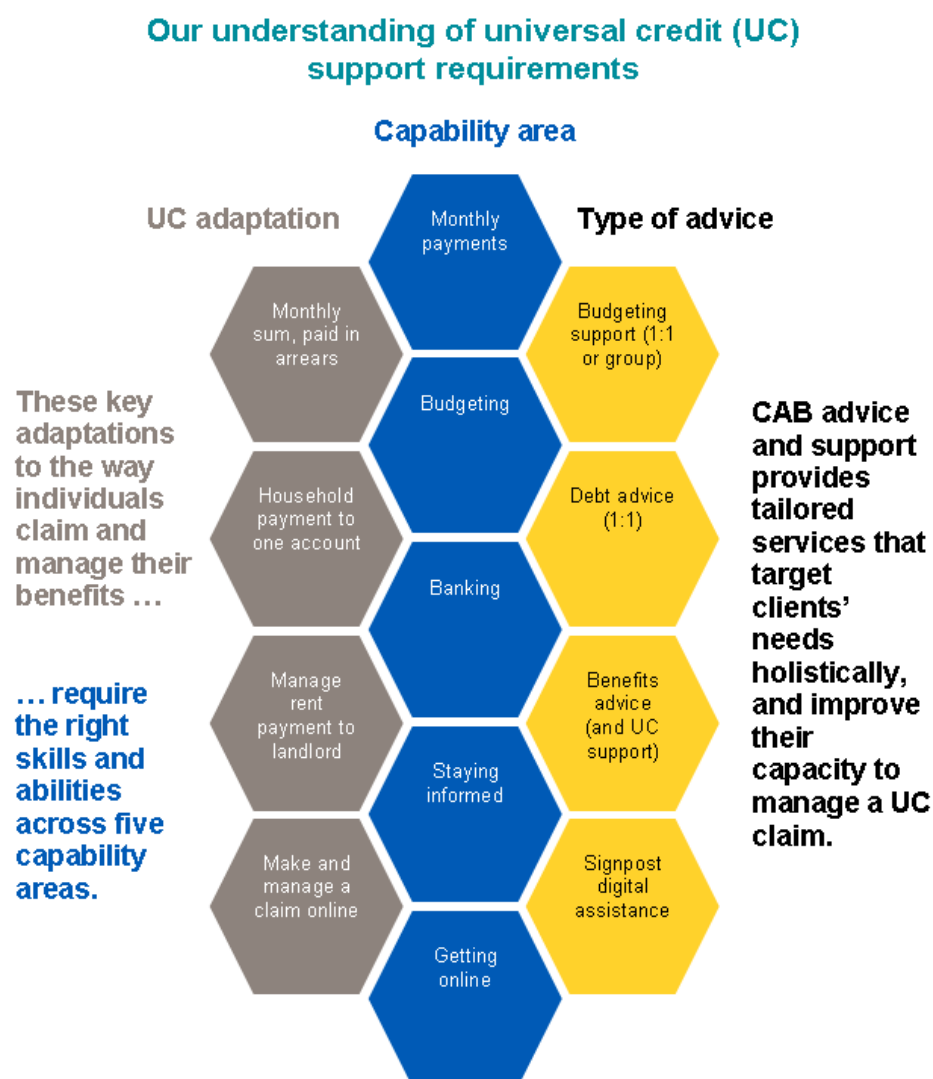
21 per cent would struggle having their benefit paid to one bank account in the household.

A further challenge with our pilot is that some clients have disengaged with the process, as they do not yet feel that universal credit is relevant to them.

Behaviour change is a long-term process, and provision needs to be put in place to ensure individuals are supported across the entire transition period, know when and how to prepare for changes, and are provided with help that suits individuals' personal needs.

We know the services that our clients will need to make the transition and this goes above and beyond our normal delivery in terms of volume and types of services provided.

We will need support to help those who will turn to us for help.



Our pilot bureaux experience

Ynys Mon Citizens Advice Bureau:

“Taking part in the Managing migration pilot has enabled us as a bureau to understand the impact universal credit will have on our clients, and allowed us to consider different ways of working to see how we can best help them to cope with the transition.”

Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau:

“The Managing migration pilot has allowed us further opportunity to engage with the welfare reform programme as a whole, whilst also giving us the impetus and the opportunity to develop strong partnerships with other service providers affected by the reforms.”

North Dorset Citizens Advice Bureau:

“Taking part in the Managing migration pilot has provided some invaluable learning for us. We now know what infrastructure is needed to deliver a sustainable service which can cope with the demands created by welfare reform – both in terms of greater capacity and new mechanisms - to support claimants through the entire transition period.”

About the Citizens Advice service

Last year the Citizens Advice service helped **2.1 million people** to solve **6.6 million problems** on a whole range of topics including debt, benefits, housing, employment, legal, discrimination and consumer problems.

Our network of **338 member bureaux** provide advice from over **3,300 locations** including prisons, courts, council office, GP surgeries, housing offices, mental health trusts, hospital and court desks in every community in England and Wales. Of the 28,500 people who work for the service, **over 22,000 of them are volunteers** who give their time generously.

More information

To find out more about this report you can find your local Citizens Advice Bureau using the search tool on: <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.htm>

For further information about our campaign on universal credit please see: <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/universalcreditcampaign>

ⁱ House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Universal Credit: early progress, thirtieth report of Session 2013–14 (7 November 2013), page 13
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubacc/619/619.pdf>